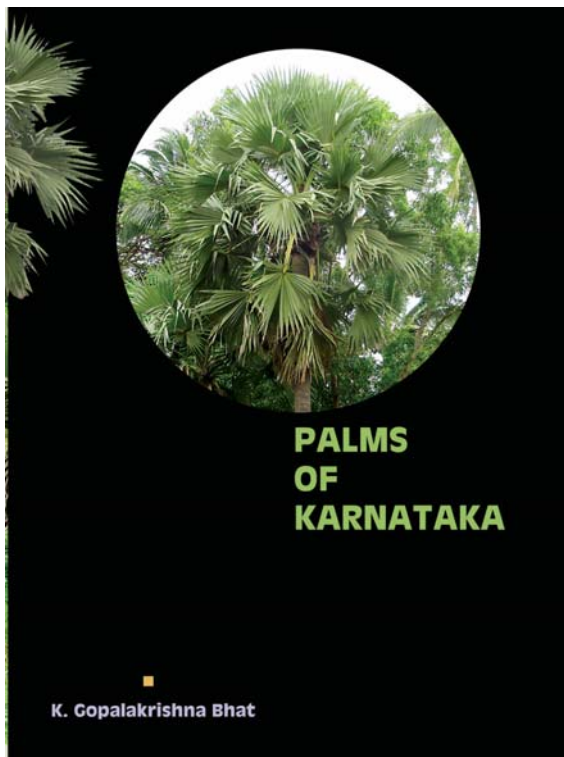


Book Review

K.Gopalakrishna Bhat 2011

Palms of Karnataka, published by K.Gopalakrishna Bhat, 'Madhuca', Srinivasa Nagara, Chitpady, Udupi – 576 101, Karnataka, India. Pages 93+vii, 6.5" x 9.5", paperback, colour. ISBN Nil, Price: ₹ 500/-.



Palms form one of the most important and extensively cultivated group of monocot flowering plants with an estimated 2364 species in 190 genera in the world (Govaerts & Dransfield, 2005). They include highly traded crops such as African oil palm, the coconut and the date palm and several locally important species like Asian canes and rattans. They are widely distributed in tropical Asia followed by tropical America, the Pacific and Africa.

The unique beauty and charm of palms, with characteristic straight cylindrical stem and a crown of large fan-shaped or feather-like leaves, made their wide utilization in landscaping. As a result, many exotic palms are being traded into our country. Many of them got naturalized and out number

(c. 150 species) the wild ones (c. 100 species). In this scenario, the documentation of our existing palm flora is very significant. In this regard, the book 'Palms of Karnataka' by K. Gopalakrishna Bhat, a Professor well acquainted with the flora of Karnataka, is a creditable attempt.

The book, a work based on intensive field studies, contains 100 pages. The text, spread over 79 pages, is divided into major heads such as introduction, distribution, materials and methods, morphology of palms and systematic part. The systematic part includes key to genera and systematic treatment of genera and species. This is followed by glossary of botanical terms, references and two indexes, one to scientific names and the other to common names (pages 81-91).

The text under first four heads provides good introduction to the family *Arecaceae* or *Palmae*. Number of genera and species, uses, global and regional distribution, major genera represented and morphology dealt in this book are of academic worth.

The book deals with 79 taxa of palms belonging to 42 genera, both wild and cultivated. The genera are arranged under subfamilies based on Dransfield *et al.* (2008). Within the genera, generic description, key to species are given wherever necessary and species are arranged alphabetically. Correct name and selected synonyms are given. This is followed by a brief description, 1 – 3 colour photographs, notes on distribution and uses, if any. English, Kannada and Tulu names are given wherever available.

The materials and methods section mainly deals with the arrangement of subfamilies, tribes and genera. It is felt better had this part appeared before the systematic treatment. References to Fischer (1931) and Beccari & Hooker (1894) in the case of wild species or any latest publication like Govaerts & Dransfield (2005) covering wild and cultivated ones, if cited, would have benefited many. So also, citation of basionyms. The 3 or 4 blank pages could

have been replete with full page or a few more relevant photographs.

The keys to genera and species along with colour photographs are very useful for the identification of taxa occurring in Karnataka. The glossary of botanical terms used in this book is very supportive to the readers. Dr. Bhat, the author has succeeded

in his stated aim of promoting identification of the palms of Karnataka. The book is printed in glossy art paper with an attractive cover and the price is affordable. It is a useful handbook for students, amateurs, collectors and palm lovers.

K.C. Koshy
JNTBGRI, Thiruvananthapuram